

Maria Stevenson – 5th March, 2019

The Rotary Foundation is one of the largest and most important programs of Rotary.

Without the Foundation, Rotary could not continue its many humanitarian programs and its efforts to promote World understanding and peace.

Maria Stevenson you have set an example for many by your contributions to your community.

Your personal involvement makes our community a better place in which to live.

The **Rotary Club of Ipswich North** recognizes these efforts and has made a contribution to the Rotary Foundation in your name. This contribution could provide educational opportunities, food for the poor, portable water in a village in Africa or India, health care, shelter, schools and books for thousands of children. It can buy cows to supply milk to an entire village or supply sewing machines to widows so they may become self-sufficient.

This Rotary Club will also be able to fulfill the Rotary dreams in our own community. The need is endless. It is customary for the Foundation to recognize the recipient as a Paul Harris Fellow. This fellowship was named after Paul Harris who founded Rotary in 1905.

Besides members of Rotary and our community, you stand with notables such as Mother Theresa, Nelson Mandela, Kofi Anann, Prince Charles, Indira Gandhi, Luciano Pavarotti, King Hussein of Jordan and Pope John Paul II.

Maria, I ask you to please remain seated while I fill everyone in on your valuable contributions to the community and education.

Maria Stevenson was born in 1940, the youngest of six children to Bruno and Carmen Tapiolas, immigrant parents who lived in Jervisfield, North Queensland.

Bruno and Carmel were pioneers of the Burdekin River delta who became champions of the cane industry in far North Queensland.

At 10 years of age Maria was afflicted by polio, causing severe and near complete paralysis for a significant period. After long periods of convalescence, Maria eventually learnt to walk again and was left with a permanent paralysis and life-long mobility impairment requiring orthotics and lower leg callipers.

Despite the impact of polio on her schooling, her parents recognised her academic potential and ambition, and insisted against advice that she sit for a State Scholarship examination with her same-aged peers. They later persevered to enrol her in a Brisbane Boarding school despite significant hesitation (indeed refusal) by schools to accept a student with mobility impairment, and ultimately Maria commenced as a boarder at St Margaret's Anglican Girls School, Ascot, Brisbane.

Prior to her illness, Maria attended Jervisfield and Ayr State Schools and subsequently St Patrick's College, Townsville.

Maria attended the University of Queensland where she met and married her husband Charles Stevenson, who was a medical student at the time. Maria graduated from the University of Queensland with a Bachelor of Science.

Maria chose to pursue her life-long ambition to be a teacher, and commenced her career as a passionate science and biology teacher at Ipswich Girls' Grammar School.

Maria devoted 40 years to IGGS because she believed in the role the School plays in educating young women.

Maria's interests over the years have extended to –

- Zonta - where she served in numerous roles over 35 years.

- University of the Third Age (U3A) Ipswich - teaching her much-loved course "Life, the Universe and Everything"

- Environmental causes and organisations such World Wide Fund For Nature (WWF), Greenpeace and Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF)

- Social Justice and Humanitarian causes such as Amnesty International and Medecins Sans Frontieres

- Community – Red Cross, Ipswich Kindergarten, Colthup Home, Ipswich Library and Rotary (through her support of her husband Rotarian Past President Charles Stevenson PHF)

Through science and education, Maria has made a life lasting impact on many.

Maria and Charles have three children – Carmen, Tanya and Anthony.

Maria's positive approach to life and the community in which she lives has provided inspiration to countless young women, her colleagues, friends and an outstanding role model to all.

Maria Stevenson on behalf of the Rotary Club of Ipswich North I am honoured to welcome you to please come forward and receive the Paul Harris pin, certificate and medal. The symbolism in this recognition is to say **Thank You** for making a difference in your community and in the lives of less fortunate people in the World.